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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001102

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SUBJECT: FORMER UDPS OFFICIAL GEARING UP FOR LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN

REF: KINSHASA 505

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Former UDPS member Eve Bazaiba -- the only publicly-declared member of the opposition party running in the DRC's elections -- has officially begun her campaign for a seat in the National Assembly, despite threats being made against her. Bazaiba, running as an independent, said she remains optimistic about her chances of winning, and promised she would continue to represent the interests of the UDPS if elected. Bazaiba also said she did not believe the UDPS would pose any significant threat to the electoral process, despite the party's boycott of elections. End summary.

¶2. (C) Eve Bazaiba, former member of the UDPS Founders Group and director of the party's recruitment and social programs, has begun her election campaign for a seat representing Kinshasa in the National Assembly. Bazaiba, running as an independent, is the only known (publicly declared) member from the opposition Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) running in the July 30 elections. After announcing her decision to run in March, Bazaiba was summarily expelled from the party by its president, Etienne Tshisekedi, who denounced her as a "traitor" for opposing his boycott of the DRC's elections (reftel).

¶3. (C) PolOff met with Bazaiba July 3 to discuss her upcoming campaign and her perceptions on the DRC's electoral process. Bazaiba said she was "cautiously" beginning her official campaign that week by putting up posters and banners in her electoral district. Bazaiba explained that she was somewhat hesitant to begin personal campaigning, as she and some of her campaign staff have been intimidated and harassed by people she refused to identify, but later admitted were known to be members of the UDPS. Bazaiba said soon after she posted her campaign materials at the beginning of the electoral campaign June 29, they were immediately torn down. Stating she was undaunted by this experience, Bazaiba said she was going to conduct an informal "door-to-door" poll among residents in her district to gauge public opinion about her candidacy. Based on what she discovers, Bazaiba said she would determine whether or not to make any public appearances. At a minimum, Bazaiba said she plans on holding two public forums a week from July 10 through the July 30 elections as a way of engaging voters and promoting her candidacy.

¶4. (C) Bazaiba said she was determined to follow all the rules of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and High Media Authority (HAM) with regard to the conduct of her campaign. She said she wanted hers to be a contest based on ideas, not personalities or ethnicity. Bazaiba admitted,

however, that running as an independent candidate meant she had limited financial resources, and thus she could not conduct the size or kind of campaign she wanted. She noted particularly (and with some envy) the vast number of billboards and other campaign banners plastered throughout the center of Kinshasa and lamented her inability to generate such exposure. Bazaiba later wondered aloud how certain presidential candidates (namely President Joseph Kabila and Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba) could get away with erecting so many campaign posters in the city, when the CEI has regulations limiting how much campaign propaganda can be posted in a certain area. Indirectly, Bazaiba charged the CEI as unfairly favoring candidates with money and thus those already in power.

¶ 15. (C) If elected, Bazaiba said she would represent the ideas and supporters of the UDPS, since she still believes in the principles of the party. As for Tshisekedi, however, Bazaiba said she felt his time on the DRC political stage was over, and there was nothing anyone could do to convince him to participate in elections. Bazaiba said it was time for the UDPS to accept new leadership and engage itself in the electoral process, although she admitted that would not likely take place until the next set of elections in five years. Bazaiba said that if elected, she hopes she will have a major role to play in leading the UDPS.

¶ 16. (C) As for the UDPS itself, Bazaiba said she does not believe the party has the capability to organize any kind of effective demonstrations which could derail the electoral process. Bazaiba said most party supporters are "too tired" to take to the streets and now realize that marches and demonstrations do not accomplish any of the party's

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objectives (namely, restarting voter registration and delaying elections). When asked if she thought the UDPS would try to incite violence or prevent elections from taking place July 30 as scheduled, Bazaiba said there would certainly be some people who will take to the streets, but overall, the UDPS can no longer mobilize crowds as it did in the past.

¶ 17. (C) Regarding the latest round of political "concertations" among Congolese presidential candidates and other political actors, Bazaiba said she did not understand the goal of such meetings and why they were necessary. Diverging again from the UDPS's position, Bazaiba said negotiations and dialogue were not necessary, and those who were calling for such things were simply trying to delay elections for their own advantage. Bazaiba said she also thought that the meetings themselves were close to being a "coup d'etat," as they were called on behalf of the "Espace Presidential," but did not include Kabila, who is the only person legally authorized to convene a meeting of the "Espace." In the end, Bazaiba said she hoped the "concertations" would at least calm tensions and appease those who were threatening the electoral process.

¶ 18. (C) Bazaiba conveyed a definite optimism about her campaign. She claimed that representatives of many of the major political parties -- including Kabila's PPRD, Bemba's MLC, Pierre Pay Pay's CODECO, and Vice President Azarias Ruberwa's RCD -- have all sought her endorsement or offered their support to her campaign if she allied herself with them. Bazaiba said she has rejected all such entreaties, as she wishes to remain independent and "remain loyal" to the UDPS when in the National Assembly. Bazaiba said she is going to focus her efforts on civic education in the days leading up to the election, as many in Kinshasa are not prepared and have little understanding of the voting process itself. Despite the lack of voter education, Bazaiba said she expected a much higher voter turnout rate in Kinshasa than that during the December constitutional referendum -- perhaps as high as 65 percent.

¶ 19. (C) Comment: It is not certain what Bazaiba's chances are

of winning, as she faces nearly 800 opponents running for 13 seats in her Kinshasa electoral district. But it is evident that some members of the UDPS are trying to discourage her from campaigning and gaining support by destroying her campaign material. Bazaiba, however, is likely not the only target of such intimidation, as many reports of political signs and posters being torn down circulate through Kinshasa. Nonetheless, Bazaiba's participation in the electoral process serves as a reminder of the deep divisions within the UDPS over Tshisekedi's decision to boycott elections -- a schism Tshisekedi would rather not be made public. End comment.

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